

January 20, 2011

The Honorable Don Roberts, Chairman
Joint Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: Community Crisis Center Funding: HB 130 (2009 Session)

Dear Chairman Roberts and Members of the Joint Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services:

On behalf of RiverStone Health, a collaborative partner along with St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings Clinic, and the South Central Montana Regional Mental Health Center in the Community Crisis Center, I am writing to ask that you restore funding for crisis diversion programs enacted in HB 130 of the 2009 Legislative Session. The decision to accept the Department of Public Health and Human Services recommendation to greatly reduce funding for HB 130 as a part of the 5% budget reduction seriously impacts our ability to service people in crisis which could lead to increased admissions and more expensive care at the Montana State Hospital.

The Community Crisis Center (CCC) provides the best level of care for individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse at the most efficient and effective site of care increasing the number of services in the community and reducing the number of admissions to the Montana State Hospital from Yellowstone County and the surrounding area. The CCC has also been a driving force in reducing the inmate population at the Yellowstone County Detention Facility.

The CCC is the first and only licensed outpatient crisis management facility/program in Montana. It is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week and has provided services to individuals from 30 of Montana's 56 counties as well as individuals from 23 states. Restoring funding will allow the Community Crisis Center (CCC) to continue providing psychosocial evaluations, chemical dependency evaluations, case management, short-term stabilization (not longer than 24 hours), evidence-based recovery groups, Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) training, Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for law enforcement, client advocacy and services to the local Mental Health Court, Access to Recovery (ACT) services for Native American clients, and crisis call response and referral services.

Thank you for your consideration to restore funding for crisis diversion programs. I look forward to working with you on this and other important public health measures. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at barbara.sch@riverstonehealth.org or 651-6420.

Sincerely,

Barbara Schneeman, Director
Communication & Advocacy

Cc: Senators Mary Caferro, Dave Lewis, Jason Priest and Representatives Tony Belcourt, Tom Burnett, John Esp, Trudi Schmidt